

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A process for producing a pellet of an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer, comprising ~~the steps of~~:

(1) introducing into a vessel an ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer solution comprising ~~containing~~ 50 parts by weight or more of an alcohol having a boiling point of 100°C or less with respect to 100 parts by weight of an ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer, contacting the solution with water vapor in said vessel to let out said alcohol with water vapor and then letting out from said vessel an ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer hydrous composition containing 0 to 10 parts by weight of said alcohol and 10 to 1000 parts by weight of water with respect to 100 parts by weight of the ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer ~~(step 1)~~;

(2) cutting the ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer hydrous composition in a molten state let out from said vessel in ~~the step 1~~ (1), thereby obtaining ~~to obtain~~ ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer hydrous composition pellets ~~(step 2)~~;

(3) introducing the ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer hydrous composition pellets obtained in (2) ~~the step 2~~ into a dryer to reduce a water content of the pellets ~~(step 3)~~;

(4) melt-kneading the pellets~~[[,]]~~ ~~whose~~ having the water content ~~[[is]]~~ reduced in (3) ~~the step 3~~, in an extruder ~~(step 4)~~; and

(5) cutting the ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer discharged from the extruder in (4), thereby obtaining ~~the step 4 to obtain~~ the pellet of the ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer ~~(step 5)~~.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): The process for producing a pellet of an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer according to Claim 1, wherein an ethylene content of said ethylene-

vinylalcohol copolymer is 3 to 70 mol% and a degree of saponification thereof is 80 mol% or more.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): The process for producing a pellet of an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer according to Claim 1, wherein said alcohol is methanol.

Claim 4 (Cancelled).

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): The process for producing a pellet of an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer according to Claim 1, wherein said ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer solution is continuously introduced into a tower type vessel and contacted with water vapor in the vessel.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): The process for producing a pellet of an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer according to Claim 5, wherein

said ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer solution is introduced from an upper part of the tower type vessel;

water vapor is introduced from a lower part of the tower type vessel;

said ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer solution is countercurrently contacted with water vapor;

thereafter said ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer hydrous composition is let out from the lower part of the tower type vessel; and

said alcohol is let out with water vapor from the upper part of the tower type vessel.

Claim 7 (Cancelled).

Claim 8 (Currently Amended): The process for producing a pellet of an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer according to Claim 1, wherein said pellets obtained by cutting in (2) ~~the step 2~~ are immersed in a washing liquid to remove a saponification catalyst residue and then supplied to said dryer of (3) ~~the step 3~~.

Claim 9 (Currently Amended): The process for producing a pellet of an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer according to Claim 1, wherein said pellets obtained by cutting in (2) ~~the step 2~~ are immersed in an aqueous solution containing at least one kind of additive selected from [[a]] the group consisting of a carboxylic acid, boron compound, phosphoric acid compound, alkali metal salt and alkaline earth metal salt to add said additive to the pellets, and then supplied to said dryer of (3) ~~the step 3~~.

Claim 10 (Currently Amended): The process for producing a pellet of an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer according to Claim 1, wherein a temperature of the pellets in said dryer is from 40 to 150°C in (3) ~~the step 3~~.

Claim 11 (Currently Amended): The process for producing a pellet of an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer according to Claim 1, wherein a water content of the pellets is reduced to 10 weight % or less in (3) ~~the step 3~~.

Claim 12 (Currently Amended): The process for producing a pellet of an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer according to Claim 1, wherein a water content of the ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer discharged from the extruder after melt-kneading is 1 weight % or less in (4) ~~the step 4~~.

Claim 13 (Currently Amended): The process for producing a pellet of an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer according to Claim 1, wherein water is removed from a molten resin in said extruder in (4) ~~the step 4~~.

Claim 14 (Currently Amended): The process for producing a pellet of an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer according to Claim 1, wherein at least one kind of additive selected from [[a]] the group consisting of a carboxylic acid, boron compound, phosphoric acid compound, alkali metal salt and alkaline earth metal salt is added in said extruder in (4) ~~the step 4~~.

Claim 15 (Currently Amended): The process for producing a pellet of an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer according to Claim 1, wherein

said pellets obtained by cutting in (2) ~~the step 2~~ are immersed in an aqueous solution containing at least one kind of additive selected from [[a]] the group consisting of a carboxylic acid, boron compound, phosphoric acid compound, alkali metal salt and alkaline earth metal salt to add said additive to the pellets, and then supplied to said dryer of (3) ~~the step 3~~; and

at least one kind of additive selected from [[a]] the group consisting of a carboxylic acid, boron compound, phosphoric acid compound, alkali metal salt and alkaline earth metal salt is added in said extruder in (4) ~~the step 4~~.

Claim 16 (Currently Amended): The process for producing a pellet of an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer according to Claim 1, wherein the ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer discharged from the extruder is cut after cooling in (5) ~~the step 5~~.

Claim 17 (Withdrawn): A process for producing an ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer resin comprising the steps of:

introducing into an apparatus an ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer solution containing 50 parts by weight or more of alcohol having a boiling point of 100°C or less with respect to 100 parts by weight of an ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer, contacting the solution with water in said apparatus to let out said alcohol with water and then letting out from said apparatus an ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer hydrous composition containing 0 to 10 parts by weight of said alcohol and 10 to 1000 parts by weight of water with respect to 100 parts by weight of the ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer; and

contacting said ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer hydrous composition with an aqueous solution containing carbon dioxide gas.

Claim 18 (Withdrawn): The process for producing an ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer resin according to Claim 17, wherein

the ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer hydrous composition let out from said apparatus is cut to obtain ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer hydrous composition pellets; and

then the ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer hydrous composition pellets are contacted with said aqueous solution containing carbon dioxide gas.

Claim 19 (Withdrawn): The process for producing an ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer resin according to Claim 17, wherein said aqueous solution containing carbon dioxide gas further contains at least one kind of additive selected from a group consisting of boron compound, phosphoric acid compound, alkali metal salt and alkaline earth metal salt.

Claim 20 (Withdrawn): The process for producing an ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer resin according to Claim 17, further comprising the step of melt-kneading the ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer hydrous composition contacted with said aqueous solution containing carbon dioxide gas in an extruder.

Claim 21 (Withdrawn): A process for producing an ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer resin comprising the steps of:

contacting an ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer with an aqueous solution containing carbon dioxide gas; and

melt-kneading the ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer contacted with said aqueous solution in an extruder.

Claim 22 (Withdrawn): The process for producing an ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer resin according to Claim 21, wherein pellets comprising the ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer are contacted with said aqueous solution containing carbon dioxide gas.

Claim 23 (Withdrawn): The process for producing an ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer resin according to Claim 21, wherein said aqueous solution containing carbon dioxide gas further contains at least one kind of additive selected from a group consisting of boron compound, phosphoric acid compound, alkali metal salt and alkaline earth metal salt.

Claim 24 (Withdrawn): The process for producing an ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer resin according to Claim 21, wherein at least one kind of additive selected from a group consisting of boron compound, phosphoric acid compound, alkali metal salt and alkaline earth metal salt is added in said extruder.

Claim 25 (Withdrawn): The process for producing an ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer resin according to Claim 21, wherein the ethylene-vinylalcohol copolymer discharged from said extruder is cut to obtain pellet of ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer.

Claim 26 (New): The process for producing a pellet of an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer according to Claim 1, wherein a water content of the pellets before being introduced into the extruder in (4) is 0.1 to 4.5 weight %.

Claim 27 (New): The process for producing a pellet of an ethylene-vinyl alcohol copolymer according to Claim 26, wherein a water content is decreased by 0.1 weight % or more between before and after (4).